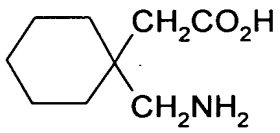
Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Claims:

1. (Original) An improved process for the preparation of gabapentin of the formula 1



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which comprises

(i) preparing an aqueous solution of Gabapentin hydrochloride in water in the ratio of one part by weight of the former to 0.5 to 3 parts by weight of the later,

(ii) preparing an aqueous solution of an alkali metal base in a

concentration in the range of 40-50% w/w

(iii) adding 0.08 to 0.3 parts by weight of the solution obtained in step (ii) to 1.5 to 4 parts by weight of the solution obtained in step (i) at a temperature in the range of 0 to 20 degree C

(iv) heating the resulting solution gradually to a temperature in the range of 50-90 degree C

(v) gradually cooling the resulting solution to a temperature in the range of 0 to 15 degree C to obtain a precipitate,

(vi) aging the precipitate for a period in the range of 0.5 hrs to 8 hrs at a temperature in the range of 0 to 15 degree C

(vii) Separating the precipitate from the mother liquor by conventional methods and

(viii) recrystallising the precipitate from a mixture of IPA, methanol & water to get Gabapentin of over 99.5 % purity and a mother liquor

2. (Original) An improved process as claimed in claim 1 wherein the amount of gabapentin hydrochloride and water used in step (i) is in the range of 0.5 to 2.5 parts of water to 1 part of the Gabapentin hydrochloride and more preferably 1.5 to 2.5 parts of the water

3. (Currently Amended) An improved process as claimed in claim 1 ~~claims 1 & 2~~ wherein the alkali used in step (ii) may preferably be sodium hydroxide or potassium hydroxide, more preferably sodium hydroxide.

4. (Currently Amended) An improved process as claimed in claim 1 ~~claims 1 to 3~~ wherein the solution of alkali used is in a concentration in the range of 40-50% w/w more preferably in the concentration in the range of 45-50% w/w in water.

5. (Currently Amended) An improved process as claimed in claim 1 ~~claims 1 to 4~~ wherein the temperature employed in step (iii) is preferably 10-20deg C and more preferably 10-15 deg C.

6. (Currently Amended) An improved process as claimed in claim 1 ~~claims 1 to 5~~ wherein the temperature employed in step (iv) used is preferably be 50-75deg C and more preferably 60-70 deg C.

7. (Currently Amended) An improved process as claimed in claim 1 ~~claims 1 to 6~~ wherein the temperature employed in step (v) is preferably 5.15 C deg and more preferably 5-10deg C .

8. (Currently Amended) An improved process as claimed in claim 1 ~~claims 1 to 7~~ wherein the time employed for aging the precipitate in step (vi) is preferably be between 0.5 to 3 hrs and more preferably 0.5 to 1 hr.

9. (Currently Amended) An improved process as claimed in claim 1 ~~claims 1 to 8~~ wherein the separation of gabapentin in step (vii) effected by filtration, more preferably centrifugation.

10. (Original) A novel improved process for the preparation of Gabalactam of the formula 3 which comprises treating the mother liquors obtained in steps (vii) & (viii) of the above mentioned process with aq.sodium hydroxide in a concentration in the range of 5 to 20% at a temperature in the range of 80 to 100 degree C, recovering the gabalactam by extraction with organic solvents.

11. (Original) A novel improved process as claimed in claim 10 wherein the concentration of sodium hydroxide used ranges from 10-to 20 %, the temperature used ranging from 80 to 85 deg C

12. (Currently Amended) A novel improved process as claimed in claim 10 ~~claims 10 & 11~~ wherein the recovery of gabalactam is effected by extracting the reaction mixture with solvents such as toluene, ethylene dichloride, methylene dichloride or hexane, preferably toluene.